

The Shenandoah District Blue Ribbon Team met on March 18, 2018, at the District Office. After a time of Scripture and prayer, we began our work the afternoon. After some thought and discussion, we came to an agreement that we are going to attempt to conduct all of our business by a consensus model of decision making. This way we will intentionally work at making decisions that all members of our team, and hopefully all members of our district, can support. Our team hopes that by modeling this kind of decision making we can encourage each of our congregations to consider this time in our District as time of mutual decision making, not merely majority wins.

Our first item of business for the afternoon was to address changing the name of our team. In our previous meeting and subsequent emails, we generated at least seven possibilities for a new name. Our hope was to pick a name that communicated our tasks as a team, as well as a name that projected the kinds of actions and posture we hope to embody as a group. After considering all of the names before us, we consented that our new name would be the District Discernment Team.

Brother John Jantzi then updated us on processes with local congregations. John shared some of the insights he has gained as he has traveled around our District. John shared the sense of joy and hope that many of our congregations are experiencing. However, John and Jon Prater both shared the kind of frustration many congregations continue to experience with the denomination and the actions of some denominational leadership. This conversation then transitioned into talking about the concerns we have heard from our District. We are aware that the discussions that we need to have are not only theological. Our team is aware that issues like property, polity, and credentialing come into play when discussing these items. We discussed ways that our team could talk openly and transparently with members of our District about such sensitive issues.

With this in mind, we decided to adjust the format of our next meeting. Our team will meet again on April 15 at the District Office. Our meeting will be from 2-5pm and follow a new format. From 2-3pm we will meet as an entire team and set parameters for our work. Then, from 3-4pm we will break up into our sub-teams and discuss the items related to our subcommittee's work. Finally, we will join together as a team from 4-5pm and debrief as a group.

Along with this format, we plan to hold the 4-5pm part of our meeting as an open session. This means that we invite any member of our District to come and sit in on the meeting. We will not be taking questions from the floor or interacting with the gallery. However, we invite anyone who is interested in hearing our reports first hand to come and join us for our last hour.